

Extension of special visiting arrangement to 18 non-acute hospitals

The following is issued on behalf of the Hospital Authority:

The Hospital Authority (HA) today (May 26) announced that the special visiting arrangement will be extended from eight to 18 non-acute hospitals beginning this weekend.

The special visiting arrangement will cover 10 more hospitals (see details in the Appendix). The visiting quotas will be determined with due consideration to the operation of individual wards. Family members have to schedule the visits via ward staff, who will begin contacting them in the next few days. Family members are not required to call the wards for booking themselves.

"To minimise the infection risk for inpatients and staff, one-off visitors are required to present a negative COVID-19 nucleic acid test result obtained within 72 hours before the scheduled visit. Regular visitors can choose to conduct weekly testing. In addition, visitors who have completed their two-dose COVID-19 vaccination for at least 14 days can opt for rapid antigen testing within 24 hours before the visit," the HA spokesperson said.

"The testing requirements for the special visiting arrangement was implemented in eight hospitals earlier, and the process was generally smooth. Visitors who use the COVID-19 rapid antigen test have to purchase the test kit and conduct it at home on their own. The visitors need to take a photo of the person being tested with the negative results and the time and date of the test. The photo, the packing and product insert of the rapid antigen test kit and the vaccination record need to be shown together to the ward staff for checking before entering the ward. Details are available on the HA webpage."

The spokesperson reminded visitors to scan the Hospital Visit QR code to fill in the health declaration form within 24 hours before the visit and show the QR code generated by the system to the ward staff. The Hospital Visit QR code is displayed on the HA webpage and in the mobile app "HA Go".

The HA hopes the community can understand that visiting arrangements will be made with certain restrictions under the current epidemic situation. Meanwhile, other hospitals and wards will continue to facilitate a compassionate visiting arrangement and video visiting as far as practicable.

"The COVID-19 rapid antigen test is also applicable for visits arranged on compassionate grounds or under urgent circumstances. Visitors, who cannot conduct the nucleic acid test within 72 hours before the visit, can perform rapid antigen testing within 24 hours before the visit or right after the

visit," the spokesperson added.

Visitors who come to the hospitals under urgent circumstances can buy a rapid antigen test kit at community pharmacies, hospital shops or vending machines. Hospital staff will guide visitors to designated or suitable locations in the hospitals for conducting the tests by themselves.

The spokesperson reiterated that all visitors entering public hospitals are required to comply with the infection control measures, such as wearing surgical masks, temperature checking and filling in health declaration forms. In addition, visitors are encouraged to scan the "LeaveHomeSafe" venue QR code displayed at all public hospitals for complete personal records of their visits. â€‹

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LCQ6: Air pollution problem in Tsuen Wan and Kwai Tsing Districts

Following is a question by the Hon Chan Han-pan and a reply by the Secretary for the Environment, Mr Wong Kam-sing, in the Legislative Council today (May 26):

Question:

The Government installed four dry weather flow interceptors (DWFIs) in Tsuen Wan one and a half years ago to intercept effluent flow in stormwater drains and drainage channels in dry weather and divert it to the sewerage

system. However, the seawater near the waterfront of Tsuen Wan still gives off stench from time to time. Besides, container vessels continue to emit pollutants after berthing at the Kwai Chung Container Terminals (KCCTs), causing air pollution problem. In this connection, will the Government inform this Council:

(1) whether it will consider requesting the operators of KCCTs to install onshore power supply facilities, so that container vessels may switch to using electricity after berthing; if so, of the details and timetable; if not, the reasons for that;

(2) whether it has gained an understanding as to why the aforesaid DWFI's have failed to solve the problem of the seawater giving off stench, and what other solutions are in place; and

(3) given that there are often strong smells of petrol near the waterfronts of Tsuen Wan and Kwai Chung, whether the Government has deployed staff to regularly inspect the berthing spaces for vessels carrying dangerous goods, so as to prevent lawbreakers from illegally selling fuel there, and whether it has considered relocating such berthing spaces; if so, of the details; if not, the reasons for that?

Reply:

President,

As regards the question raised by the Hon Chan Han-pan, having consulted the Drainage Services Department (DSD) and the Marine Department (MD), my response is as follows:

(1) To improve air quality, the Government controls the use of marine fuel in vessels to reduce their emissions of sulphur dioxide and suspended particulates. Starting from July 1, 2015, Hong Kong was the first port in Asia to mandate ocean-going vessels (OGVs) to switch to low sulphur fuel (i.e. fuel with sulphur content not exceeding 0.5 per cent) while at berth in Hong Kong waters. From January 1, 2019, the Government further collaborated with the Mainland to jointly set up a Domestic Emission Control Area (DECA) in the Pearl River Delta region. All vessels (including OGVs) within the DECA (including Hong Kong waters) are required to use compliant fuel (including low sulphur fuel), irrespective of whether they are sailing or berthing, which was a year earlier than the implementation of the global sulphur cap (i.e. limiting the sulphur content in fuel to not exceeding 0.5 per cent) by the International Maritime Organisation on January 1, 2020. Since the implementation of the above measures, the annual average concentration of sulphur dioxide recorded in 2020 at the Kwai Chung Air Quality Monitoring Station in the vicinity of the KCCTs has reduced by about 70 per cent as compared with 2014, indicating that the control measures have been effective.

As regards the Hon Chan's question on whether onshore power supply (OPS) facilities can be installed at the KCCTs so that container vessels can switch to use electricity while at berth, it should be noted that vessels must be

equipped with appropriate OPS facilities for connecting to the OPS systems at the terminals. Currently, there are few OGVs in the world equipped with OPS facilities and such installation is not common. The installation of OPS facilities at the KCCTs at this moment will not bring along any apparent improvement in air quality. We will continue monitoring the international development of OPS and other emission reduction technologies so as to timely consider the need of providing OPS facilities at the KCCTs for OGVs.

(2) Similar to many old urban areas in Hong Kong, Tsuen Wan is a densely populated district packed with new and old buildings and vibrant city activities. This unavoidably result in some polluted surface run-off entering the Tsuen Wan Bay via the stormwater drainage system, causing odour problem to the near-shore waters. In order to improve the coastal water quality of old districts along Victoria Harbour including Tsuen Wan, the Government commissioned a consultancy study on Further Enhancing the Quality of Coastal Waters of Victoria Harbour to conduct a holistic review of the situation in various districts and to develop necessary improvement measures.

The provision of dry weather flow interceptors (DWFIs), in location such as Kai Tak Nullah, has been demonstrated as an effective measures in preventing polluted water from entering the sea through stormwater drainage system. The four DWFIs mentioned by Hon Chan are located at Tsuen Wan Market Street, Wo Di Street, Hoi Pa Street and Chung On Street. These DWFIs built by the DSD in October 2019 are part of an advanced project implemented by the Government for early improvement of the coastal water quality of Tsuen Wan Bay. At present, these DWFIs have been intercepting some pollutants from entering Tsuen Wan Bay as designed. Furthermore, we are constructing another eight DWFIs in Kwai Chung and Tsuen Wan to intercept the wastewater from the rural areas and prevent it from entering the marine waters in Tsuen Wan via stormwater drainage system. These DWFIs will be progressively completed by 2023.

In order to resolve the odour problem at Tsuen Wan Bay in the long term, we are planning some newly designed large-scale dry weather interception facilities at downstream location of the box culverts of Tai Ho Road and Ma Tau Pa Road as recommended in the consultancy study. These facilities aim to cover the largest rainwater catchment area in Tsuen Wan District and intercept the maximum amount of pollutants. The works project has been included in the Public Works Programme, and the investigation and design work is underway. Subject to support from the local community and funding approval by the Legislative Council, the project is expected to be completed in 2027/28 the earliest.

In addition, the DSD and the Hong Kong University of Science and Technology has developed a new technology on "odour-control hydrogel" which was found effective in reducing odour in drainage systems during the on-site tests. We commenced in stages since March 2021 the deployment of "odour-control hydrogel" at stormwater outfall locations of Tsuen Wan waterfront and their vicinity where there are potential odour problems.

Looking ahead, we will continue to implement various measures to enhance the quality of coastal waters and improve the overall environment of Tsuen

Wan Bay, which include tracing pollution sources; stepping up our enforcement actions; rectifying sewer misconnections; clearing and desilting drains; rehabilitating underground sewers progressively; and conducting publicity and education on prevention of near-shore water pollution.

(3) The MD deploys patrol launch to conduct routine patrol duties in Tsuen Wan and Kwai Chung water areas. Apart from routine ship safety inspection, the MD will also carry out educational/promotional activities such as distribution of safety leaflets and anti-littering operation from time to time. The MD did not find any illegal fueling activity at the Tsuen Wan Dangerous Goods Anchorage (TWDGA) in the past few years.

The TWDGA was established in 1968 for the berthing and sheltering of local oil carries. As the TWDGA is located in sheltered waters, it is the only DGA in Hong Kong with private moorings (70 in total) for the local oil carriers. Since the TWDGA is operating well, the MD has no plan for relocation at the moment.

Thank you, President.

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Update on monitoring COVID-19 vaccination

In the preceding week till 11.59pm on May 23, the Department of Health (DH) received 217 reports (Note 1) of adverse events following COVID-19 immunisation, including two death cases reported by the Hospital Authority (HA) involving individuals who had received COVID-19 vaccines.

As at 8pm on May 23, about 2.14 million doses of COVID-19 vaccines had been administered for members of the public. Around 1.25 million people had received at least one dose of vaccine, accounting for 19.1 per cent of the population aged 16 or above. The DH received 3 107 reports (Note 1) of adverse events (0.14 per cent of the total vaccine doses administered), including 21 death cases with vaccination within 14 days before they passed away (0.001 per cent of total vaccine doses administered).

As at May 23, the Expert Committee on Clinical Events Assessment Following COVID-19 Immunisation (Note 2) had concluded that eight death cases had no causal relationship with vaccination, and preliminarily considered that 24 cases were not associated with vaccination. Two cases were pending assessment. The Expert Committee considered that there is no unusual pattern identified so far, and will continue to closely monitor the relevant situation and collect data for assessment.

According to information from the HA, during the period from April 26 to May 23, the ratio of death cases out of those without a vaccination record was 54.0 cases for every 100 000 people, whereas the ratio of death cases for those with a vaccination record was 2.9 cases for every 100 000 people. The overall death rate is similar to that recorded in the past three years. Out of those without a vaccination record, the ratio of death cases with acute stroke or acute myocardial infarction was 2.9 cases for every 100 000 people, whereas the ratio of death cases under the same category for those with a vaccination record was 0.3 cases for every 100 000 people. Furthermore, the ratio of miscarriage cases out of those without a vaccination record was 23.3 cases for every 100 000 people, whereas the ratio of miscarriage cases for those who had a vaccination record was 4.0 cases for every 100 000 people. Based on the statistical analysis of the above figures, there is no evidence that vaccination increases the risk of death or miscarriage for recipients. The relevant reference statistics will be uploaded to the

thematic website for the COVID-19 Vaccination Programme.

The majority of non-death cases of adverse events received so far are relatively minor cases. The relevant details can be found in the "Report on the Safety Monitoring of COVID-19 Vaccines in Hong Kong" (www.drugoffice.gov.hk/eps/do/en/doc/Safety_Monitoring_of_COVID-19_Vaccines_in_Hong_Kong.pdf).

Note 1: Provisional figures

Note 2: The Expert Committee on Clinical Events Assessment Following COVID-19 Immunisation performs continuous monitoring of the possible adverse events following administration of COVID-19 vaccines, and provides professional views and suggestions on safety monitoring of the authorised COVID-19 vaccines. The membership list and the key functions of the Expert Committee can be found at the following website (www.covidvaccine.gov.hk/en/expert).